

Interviewer: Amanda Frauenfelder

INTERVIEW AND TAPE SUMMARY

Name: Isabella Vartan (7/16/23) + Helen Abbott (8/16/26)

Date and Place of Birth: Lincoln Place, Granite City, USA

Address: 

Telephone Number: 

Interview Date, Time, and Place:

October 10, 2001. 11am - 12:30pm.
Isabella Vartan's residence

Interview Summary (attach additional sheets, as needed):

Isabella was very informative. I was originally going to interview each sister separately, but Helen wanted to be there this time, too. Isabella said she felt more comfortable with Helen there. Isabella is very sharp, intelligent, & has a great memory. She tended to talk more, which could be because she's older than Helen, or since she was the one I was supposed to originally interview. We discussed their background. Their ancestors are from Armenia. The mother & sister,

Note any special circumstances involving the interview:

It was both Helen & Isabella. There were a couple times during the interview one or the other got up to get pictures, or something else to show me. In the end, their son came in & disrupted it a little, but we were getting ready to wrap up. Everything else OK. →

Amanda Frauenfelder
November 5, 2001
History 447, Valk
Biography #1

Biographical Information of Isabella Vartan and Helen Abbott

Lincoln Place has remained a strong community with a diverse ethnic composition carried on by generations. Lincoln Place branched out on both sides of Pacific Avenue, which later became Niedringhaus Avenue in 1940, in Granite City, Illinois. The city was established in 1896, by two successful manufacturers, William F. and Frederick Niedringhaus, searing for land close to St. Louis to construct more graniteware and iron factories on.¹ In the early 1900's many single European men immigrated to Granite City to work at factories, predominantly steel, and resided in Lincoln Place, which was a lower to middle class neighborhood. One Armenian man, Avedis Parsaghian, wanted a better life for his family and decided to come to the United States shortly before World War I broke out. He worked on railroads in northeastern US and then finally settled in Granite City. He worked at a factory within walking distance from his house. During the atrocious Armenian genocide that coincided with WWII, Avedis' wife, Ankeen, and their daughter were struggling to survive. Ankeen and the daughter would travel at night, through the fields avoiding the Turkish soldiers on horseback, and hide during the day. Miraculously, Avedis was able to go to Armenia and bring his wife and daughter, Nevart, to the US. The small family from Moush, Armenia, began their new life together in a house on Maple Street, Lincoln Place, Granite City. The couple had a son and two more daughters, Helen and Isabella. Isabella Vartan and Helen Abbott interviewed with me on October 10, 2001, sharing their experiences and memories of Lincoln Place.

¹ "Granite City, Illinois" brochure. Where We Live Program, St. Louis, Missouri, 1994.